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TOP FEDERAL OFFICIALS JOIN GOVERNOR DANIELS AT INDIANA PANDEMIC PLANNING SUMMIT

Acknowledging that pandemics happen and require a strong local response, Governor Mitch Daniels and HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt today addressed federal, state, and local public health officials, business and community leaders, and the public about pandemic flu preparedness during a daylong event at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. They also signed a planning resolution committing the state and federal governments to planning efforts. Secretary Leavitt is in Indiana as part of a national tour of states, as the federal government prepares the country for a potential influenza pandemic.

“Pandemics are global in nature but their effects are always local, so I am pleased that Governor Daniels is taking a leadership role to prepare Indiana for this threat,” Secretary Leavitt said. “Pandemic planning needs to address how schools, businesses, public agencies, faith-based organizations and others participate in pandemic preparedness. With this meeting, local officials can identify needs specific to Indiana communities and begin crucial coordination to assure readiness if a pandemic outbreak strikes.”

“With good fortune, and effective work that Secretary Leavitt and others are doing elsewhere in the world, we hope that none of the steps discussed today will be needed. But there are folks who are devoting their efforts to working on this and preparing the state and the nation. It is our duty to be prepared,” said Governor Daniels.

Governor Daniels and Secretary Leavitt signed a planning resolution during the summit, agreeing to prepare the state for the possibility of a pandemic influenza. In the planning resolution, HHS committed to providing guidance and technical assistance to Indiana and provided an initial \$2,007,596 of financial assistance for planning. Also, HHS agreed to review the state’s plans for use, storage and distribution of antivirals and notify it of its portion of the federal stockpile of pandemic influenza antiviral drugs. Indiana agreed to assure that its operational plan for pandemic influenza response is an integral element of the overall state and local emergency response plan and to establish a Pandemic Preparedness Coordinating Committee representing all relevant stakeholders. The state will also exercise its preparedness plan within six months of today’s summit.

Secretary Leavitt outlined a series of in-state summits to address pandemic preparedness on December 5. Invited guests include first responders, business leaders, educators, health care providers, faith-based organizations, volunteer agencies, policy makers and others.

The in-state summits will help the public health and emergency response community in each state inform and involve their political, economic and community leadership in this process. Secretary Leavitt and other top HHS officials will participate in the meetings over the next few months. HHS has also prepared tools to help with the planning process, including a state and local checklist, a business checklist, a guide for individuals and families, a checklist for faith-based organizations, and a checklist for schools. The guides were distributed at the summit.

More information on pandemic flu readiness is available at www.pandemicflu.gov. Indiana's efforts to prepare for a flu pandemic are available at www.in.gov/isdh/.

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